

HIST-403
The Revolutionary Era in American History
Fall 2012

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Office hours: Monday 2-3, Wednesday 1:30-2:30, or by appointment

How revolutionary was the American Revolution? This course examines the Revolution as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon that accompanied the War of Independence but one whose ultimate significance remained unsettled for at least decade after the Treaty of Paris. The course begins roughly in 1763 and follows American colonists through the imperial crisis that led to the declaration of independence and years of war with Britain, followed by the creation of a national republic and attempts to forge a distinctive American identity in the postwar era. Although we will, of course, discuss the War of Independence, please note that this is *not* a course in military history.

Daily reading assignments, which will be discussed in class, are listed on the course schedule, below. Most weeks, you will read the introductory essay to a chapter in your text/documents reader, *Revolutionary America*, to prepare for Monday's class; most weeks, to prepare for Wednesday's class, you will read some documents. The class will also read and discussion four other books over the course of the semester, at least three of which will be the main sources you will use to write your required papers.

Texts for this course, which are available at the campus bookstore and online (new and used) at amazon.com and elsewhere are as follows:

- Cynthia A. Kierner, *Revolutionary America, 1750-1815: Sources and Interpretation (RA)*
- Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party and the Making of America*
- David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*
- David Waldstreicher, *Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification*
- Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the Early Republic*

Written assignments for this course will be three analytical essays (see specific assignments on the last page of this syllabus) and an open-notes all-essay final exam on Monday 17 December at 10:30 a.m.

Course grades will be computed as follows:

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| • Short papers (3 x 20%) | 60% |
| • Final examination | 30% |
| • Participation/discussion | 10% |

Finally, please note that all students are subject to the George Mason University Honor Code (see <http://jju.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/honor.htm>). The penalty for cheating or plagiarism on any assignment will be—at a minimum—a grade of F for this course.

Course Schedule

Mon. 27 Aug.: Introduction: Empire and Liberty (RA, 1-10, 29-37)

Wed. 29 Aug.: Reading Historical Documents (RA docs. 10-11, 24-27, 37-40, 45-47, 49-53)

Mon. 3 Sept.: *Labor Day--no class*

Wed. 5 Sept.: Reform and Resistance (RA, 54-64)

Mon. 10 Sept.: The Stamp Act Crisis (RA docs. 64-75)

Wed. 12 Sept.: The Townsend Duties and Nonimportation (RA docs. 75-84)

Mon. 17 Sept.: The Road to Rebellion (RA, 85-100)

Wed. 19 Sept.: Discussion of Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots* (Paper 1 due)

Mon. 24 Sept.: Asserting Independence (RA, 114-22)

Wed. 26 Sept.: Whigs and Tories (RA docs. 133-40)

Mon. 1 Oct.: War for Independence: New England and Mid-Atlantic Phases (RA, 141-49)

Wed. 3 Oct.: Discussion of Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (Paper 2 due)

Tues. 9 Oct.: War for Independence: Southern Campaign (RA, 170-78)

Wed. 10 Oct.: Battlefield and Homefront (RA docs. 166-68, 178-93)

Mon. 15 Oct.: Who Should Rule at Home (RA, 197-205)

Wed. 17 Oct.: Three Issues: Democracy, Religious Freedom, and the Rights of Women (RA docs. 205-21)

Mon. 22 Oct.: Confederation and Constitution (RA, 227-35)

Wed. 24 Oct.: Discussion of RA, 243-53 (U.S. Constitution) and Waldstreicher, *Slavery's Constitution* (Paper 3 due)

Mon. 29 Oct.: Federalists and Antifederalists (RA, 255-264)

Wed. 31 Oct.: *The Federalist Papers* and the Campaign for Ratification (RA docs. 264-85)

Mon. 5 Nov.: The Federalist Era (RA, 286-95)

Wed. 7 Nov.: Power and Liberty (RA docs. 299-301, 305-11)

Mon. 12 Nov.: Discussion of Freeman, *Affairs of Honor* (Paper 4 due)

Wed. 14 Nov.: *No class.*

Mon. 19 Nov.: Forging a National Culture (RA, 312-21)

Wed. 21 Nov.: *Thanksgiving Break—no class.*

Mon. 26 Nov.: Education, Arts, and Symbols for a New Nation (RA docs. 321-44)

Wed. 28 Nov.: Securing the Revolution (RA, 345-55)

Mon. 3 Dec.: The West and the War of 1812 (RA docs. 362-74)

Wed. 5 Dec.: Remembering the Revolution (RA, 376-85 and one document of your choice)

Instructions for Papers

Please find below topics/questions for four paper, three of which you must write—or you may choose to submit papers on all four papers and have only the three highest grades count toward your final grade for the course. When you prepare your essays, make sure that you address the topic directly and thoroughly.

You should not do additional research to complete these assignments, but I expect you to have mastered the required reading and to be able to draw on relevant texts to construct or support your arguments. Specifically, regardless of which assignments you choose, for each paper you must use and cite at least three relevant documents from *Revolutionary America*. (You must use and cite the documents themselves--i.e., primary sources--and not the editor's introductions. You may choose documents we have read for class and/or those that have not been assigned.)

All papers must be a minimum of four full pages, double-spaced, excluding notes—no huge margins, no enormous fonts—and a maximum of six. Please note that historians use “Chicago” or “Turabian” style footnotes or endnotes; if you choose to include citations in your paper, you must use this format. For sample citations, consult Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers* (many editions), or see the brief overview at http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch10_sl-0001.html.

To receive full credit, all papers must be turned in by noon on the due dates listed on the syllabus. Please submit papers to me as Word documents via email (ckierner@gmu.edu). Papers received later the same day are subject to a penalty of three points (out of 100); those submitted a day late are subject to a five-point penalty, with an extra five-point deduction for each additional day.

Essay 1 (due Wed. 19 Sept.)

Drawing on *Defiance of the Patriots* and other sources, explain the economic, cultural, political significance of tea and tea-drinking (and the eventual proscription thereof) in pre-revolutionary America.

Essay 2 (due Wed. 3 Oct.)

Drawing on *Washington's Crossing* and other sources, describe the experiences of common soldiers in revolutionary America. Be sure to use specific examples to support your generalizations.

Essay 3 (due Wed. 24 Oct.)

Drawing on *Slavery's Constitution* and other sources, explain how and why slavery was both weakened and strengthened during and after the American Revolution.

Essay 4 (due Mon. 12 Nov.)

Write a critical book review of *Affairs of Honor*. Your review should summarize Freeman's argument and critique it, based on your reading of her evidence and at least three documents from your reader. Is her interpretation of political parties as primarily personal, rather than policy-based, persuasive?